

## **EDUCATION INITIATIVES FOR THE NEW NEVADA**

### **Governor Sandoval's Proposed Program of Accountability**

*"We will make investments from early learning through high school graduation... We will tie those investments to performance, with targeted grants wherever possible. There will be no blank check."*

Governor Brian Sandoval

January 15, 2015

Governor Sandoval has proposed targeted investments in Nevada's system of education, from preschool through college. A heavy emphasis is placed on K-12 student success. But the Governor is cognizant that Nevadans deserve a return on their educational investment. His plan therefore contains significant accountability measures to ensure new spending is used only for its intended purposes and that results are achieved.

#### Spending is Restricted to Specific Purposes

Each of the categorical grant programs proposed in the Governor's Recommended Budget is focused on specific interventions and programs that help students and educators – and the money can only be spent for that purpose, whether it's literacy, special education, career and technical education, or the purchase of new technology. Many programs require competitive applications from the districts and charter schools. Most funds are restricted from collective bargaining and will be allocated by the State Department of Education according to strict performance guidelines and per pupil allotments. The programs will then be monitored to ensure compliance.

#### Third Party Evaluations

The Governor has also included funding for external evaluation of the various programs in his budget. The Department must contract with an outside evaluator (or team of evaluators, depending on the scope of service available) to determine if the programs are succeeding. Too often we rely on the grant recipients, in this case school districts, to tell us if we are achieving results. Future sessions of the Legislature will have concrete information about performance and whether to continue or stop funding in each of the new programs.

#### District Accountability

The Governor has said he will support legislation that changes how local school boards and school districts operate. This will include a bill to provide local districts the option of appointing some school board members, and a requirement to engage the community in a conversation about whether some board members should be appointed if the existing board loses the confidence of local voters, fails to improve school performance, or makes material errors in critical financial reports to the State. Another bill will provide local cities the option of breaking up large urban districts and will allow small rural districts to consolidate in order to better serve students and save tax dollars. The current governance model dates from 1955 when there were only 237,000 people in the entire state; we now have twice that many *students* in our schools. Local voters should have a voice in changing this antiquated system if they are dissatisfied.

#### Ending Underperformance

In his State of the State Address, Governor Sandoval spoke out against chronic underperformance in our schools, saying "we must draw a line in the sand" with a means to place underperforming schools within the control of the State Department if necessary. Legislation this session will call for the creation of a State-managed Achievement School District to improve the most persistently underperforming schools. Following the lead of states like Louisiana and Tennessee, by School Year 2016-17 Nevada may see 6-10 schools

removed from district management and individually matched with a nationally recognized charter school organization that has a track record of turning around low performing schools.

### Modernizing the Nevada Plan

While the Governor's Budget makes significant shifts in how the State will provide per pupil funding, his legislative proposals will also modernize an antiquated law that provides for only a single "count day" of enrollment and allows little to no transparency about how schools are funded. The Nevada Plan for School Finance was written in 1967 and hasn't been updated since; the Governor believes it's time for increased transparency and modernization to ensure we are getting our money's worth. He will also support legislative efforts to ensure money reaches the classroom in key programs and local allocation models.

### Pay for Performance

The Governor is introducing legislation to exempt district pay-for-performance compensation plans from collective bargaining and to require districts to set aside sufficient funding to provide bonuses to highly effective teachers and principals and incentivize our best educators to teach and lead in at-risk or underperforming schools.

### Collective Bargaining Reform and Other Measures

The Governor is working closely with legislative leadership to pass the right reforms of our collective bargaining laws. We must ensure that districts are spending money where it is needed most and that a return on educational investment is not overshadowed by employee compensation models. He will also support legislative efforts to revise the delayed system of educator evaluation so it can be used as soon as possible in making sound personnel decisions.

### Targets and Benchmarks

For the first time, the Nevada Department of Education is setting broad statewide targets to be achieved through its work – including the programs funded in the Governor's Budget. Three primary areas include students reading by the end of third grade, middle school students who are ready for high school, and high school graduation with lower remediation rates. The State Board of Education reviews these targets and benchmarks annually as part of the State Plan to Improve the Achievement of Pupils, which can be found here:

[http://www.doe.nv.gov/Boards\\_Commissions\\_Councils/State\\_Board\\_of\\_Education/State\\_Improvement\\_Plan/](http://www.doe.nv.gov/Boards_Commissions_Councils/State_Board_of_Education/State_Improvement_Plan/).